1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

for this village exogamy is that originally members of one and the same clan (*gotra* or *gotar*) lived together, as the traditions of the Dudh and Dhelki sections definitely testify, and as is still the case in many Hill Kharia settlements."[1] The Kols themselves offer other explanations for this type of exogamy, but the idea of the oneness of the village lies at the back of certain of their reasons. Some said that the children of a village living, as they do, like brothers and sisters makes any thought of such unions repugnant. A similar reason was implied in the response that the boys and girls know each other too well and such a condition would not be conducive to the future marriage relationships. It was also asserted that the presence of parents-in-law was not desirable in the same village, for if the bride was ever beaten by her husband (and it was thought that this was inevitable) her parents might be very angry and a serious quarrel with much trouble between the families was sure to result. Therefore it was considered best to get a girl from another village, and the further the village, the better the chances of avoiding such parent-in-law conflicts. Near Katni they claimed that they often got their girls from the Jubbulpore section, and that they sometimes had gone as far as Assam, where Kols have gone to work in the tea gardens.

As remarked earlier, no trace of a clan exogamy could be found among the Kols of to-day, nor an exogamy based on god-septs as among the Gonds,[2] where marriage is not possible between clans with the same number of gods. A family having three gods may marry into another with the same gods or into another with other and a different number of gods.

MARRIAGE LIMITATIONS. There is, however, a clear line limiting the choice of either the bride or the bridegroom. It is based on kinship, for as long as relationship is remembered no marriage should take place. No trace was found of the cross-cousin marriage nor of the ancient Munda custom of marrying a grandfather to a granddaughter.[3] No distinctions are made between cousins. The Kols also possess that which Lowie calls the "incest horror."[4] Children of siblings are brothers and sisters and between them marriage is considered impossible. The levirate, in which the younger brother may be expected to take the wife of a deceased elder brother, is acknowledged. There is, however, no necessity for his doing this, and public opinion does not enforce it; yet in a real sense he is responsible for her welfare and

1 Roy, S. C., *The Kharias*, p. 224.
2 Grigson, W. V., *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, pp. 194, 195, 229.
3 Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Race in India*, p. 117.
4 Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Society*, pp. 15, 16.

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occasionally she is taken as his wife if he is unmarried or is able to support another wife. No trace of the sororate was found among the Kols. 582 [587]

BARS TO MARRIAGE. Before marriage is possible there are a few other matters that must be carefully checked. That the younger child must never be married before the elder, is a custom quite commonly observed all over India; the proper and the correct thing is to marry the children in the order of their ages. There is another interesting limitation; the eldest boy of a family (*Jetha*) must never marry the eldest girl (*Jetha* or *Jethi*) in the month of *Jetha* (May-June). If this be done it is bound to result in a very unhappy and quarrelsome match.

Physical or mental defects are also bars to marriage, or at least to satisfactory marriages. A person who is half-witted or deformed has very little chance of making a favourable marriage. Often such children do not survive, not through any deliberate action on the part of the parents, but being so helpless, or unable to take care of themselves as the children of the poor must do, they are simply not able to survive. Blind girls generally remain unmarried, but a blind boy who knows some kind of hand work which he may use to help support his wife may be married. If deformed children survive and do not get married they remain at home where their parents support them. 582 732

If a Kol bachelor should "keep" a woman he is not allowed to contract a real marriage until such time as this woman is renounced; the *panch* sees to this. It is not unknown that a bachelor may keep a young widow, give her up for marriage with another girl, and then after those formalities are over and forgotten, bring her back into his house as a kept woman. He will have to pay a fine or give a feast as the *panch* decides, but he is not forced to drive her out. 582 [836] [837 684 692]

Sometimes a man feels that he cannot stand the expense and obligations that go with a *pakka* or real marriage. He desires to marry, say, a certain girl, or his parents want him to do so, and there can be found no valid objection to such a match, nor is there any element in it which would force an elopement. In such a case the matter is put up to the *panchayat* and if it is ascertained that the woman in question has not been married before and that there are no other valid bars to the marriage the permission may be given. Instead of the wedding formalities the only expense involved is that of feeding the proper persons—the *panch*, the relatives, or perhaps the whole community. This decision usually rests with the *panch* itself. The formal ceremonies consist in the putting of ten black bangles on the arms of the 584 585

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(3) Marriage by forcible application of vermilion, (4) Intrusion, (5) Widow.[1] 583

In discussing marriage with the Kols of Central India it was generally found that they recognized only one type of marriage. When asked about the remarriage of widows, they would say "yes", but indicated that while widows could remarry this was nevertheless a concession. A woman, they say, may be truly married but once; a man may be married several times. They know of the intrusion marriage (*Ghar baita*), and one of the stories in connection with the *kurhi* illustrated that form,[2] but it occurs very seldom. A Kolin may go and live as a servant in the house of a man she wants to marry. The man may take her to be his wife, but there is in this case no formal marriage ceremony; nevertheless he must feast the *panchayat* as a penalty. Kols claim that while they have heard of the *sendur* marriage, where the red mark is forcibly applied to the girl's head by her lover in some public place where it can be witnessed, they do not know that it has ever happened among the Kols. At least they professed ignorance of such an occurrence. The known types of marriage, including the elopement marriage which frequently occurs, are dealt with below.

[587] [581] [357]

FORMS OF MARRIAGE PRACTISED BY KOLS: 1. *The Elopement Marriage* (*Bhagal*). This type of marriage may take two forms with variations in each. The first type is the least binding and has no recognized standing. If there should be a love match between a couple in the same village or a nearby village, who, because of parental opposition cannot easily be married, and no commitments have been made by the parents on either side to any other arrangement, the couple may decide to go off secretly together. They may go to some friendly relative's home in another village or perhaps will put up a grass hut in which they begin to live and thus start life as man and wife. The young man puts ten black bangles on the girl's wrists, some *sendur* on her forehead, and she is reckoned as his wife. Later on, should the young couple want to return to the village they may be allowed to live there provided that they give a feast as directed by the *panch*. It is unusual, however, that they get off so easily. However, if the young couple who elope are within prohibited degrees of relationship or if they are not of the same *kurhi* they cannot be received back into the community and must become virtual outcastes from those who know them. They will probably be forced to

[835] [626]

1 Roy, S. C., *The Kharias*, p. 229.

2 See pages 38, 39.

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food made by boiling the pulse and the rice together. When this is prepared she offers each of the male guests a portion of it and they in turn give her from two to four annas which she is allowed to keep for her own use. Following this there is a big feast at the boy's house and the night is spent in chatting, singing and dancing.

(5) *Raman* or *Rouna:* Final Break with her Family. There now remains one more thing, which is the simplest of all to do: to bring the bride back for good. The *raman* is the last part of the cycle and is the taking possession of the girl and the bringing her for the last time to the bridegroom's house. The time for this is set by the *pandit* and there is said to be very little ceremony or no ceremony at all. The bridegroom simply goes with one or two male friends and the girl is brought back to his home in a *palki* and "they live happily ever after." She is now a member of the new household but may come and go at will between the two places.

3. WIDOW REMARRIAGE : (*Kari hui* ; *Path*). It is nevertheless well recognized that a widow may be married again though for the Kols such unions are not marriages in the strict sense. We were often told that while a man may be married more than once, a woman can be married not more than once.

The Kols recognize two possible forms of widow marriage : a widower marrying a widow and a bachelor taking a widow as his wife. The latter form is the least common. Some say that a union like this should never be dignified by the term marriage, for while a Kol bachelor may "keep" a widow he may never marry her and the union has no legal standing. Others call it but half a marriage. Such a liason is never allowed if the Kol bachelor is living in his parents' home ; it is only after he leaves the home that such a thing is possible. As long as this widow is kept by him the *panch* sees that he does not contract a real marriage with anyone else.

There are, however, traces of a sort of legalization of this procedure, but this really consists in first making the Kol a widower ! If he wishes to marry the widow he must first consult the *panch*. They will usually do their best to try to dissuade him, but if he persists they tell him what he will have to do in the way of penalties. If he is willing it has to be ascertained whether the girl also is agreeable. If she is not, the thing is off, but the Kol youth would probably not have made the request without being sure of her consent. The *panch* then arranges a mock wedding for him, and he is "married" to some inanimate thing. There are several forms possible ; one is that the bachelor should be made

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587 588 to perform the *bhanwar* (circumambulation) seven times about a silver or a gold ring fastened to a *magrohan* stick smeared with *sendur*. This marries him to the ring. Immediately after this procedure he should be anointed with sweet oil mixed with *haldi*—a sign that the "wife" has died and that he is now a widower. He may then put black glass bangles on the widow, and after giving a feast as directed by the *panch* he may take the widow into his home without shame and as if with the permission of the community. Roy has noted a similar custom, only that the bachelor is married to a brass *lota* or a flower.[1] He however, says nothing of the bachelor being made a widower.

587 This type of marriage is very unusual, the more common type of widow marriage being between a real widower and a widow. It may be said in passing that a Kol widower may marry a virgin, and that if this is done the regular form of marriage is resorted to in full.

587 623 When a Kol widower wishes to marry a certain widow he should first take the matter up with his *panch*. They look into the matter of relationships and the like, and deal with it on its merits. If it is agreed upon, some one from the *panch* is commissioned to go to the place where the widow is living (probably with her relatives), and through her female relatives make enquiry to see if she would welcome this match. If she is willing and her *panch* has no objection, the way is clear. The widower is told by the *panch* what he will have to do by way of a feast, and this he must do before he is allowed to proceed further. A *barat* is made up and the widower and his party go to the village of the widow where they stay for three days and go through the general procedure as in the case of the regular marriage, without, however, building a *marhwa* or the like, and the general festivities are limited to dancing, singing and eating. The widower must bear all the expenses, none being borne by the widow or her relatives. On the third day the *panch* of her village is called together and certain questions are asked as to their intentions. Upon satisfactory answers they are made to sit together and often they are anointed with oil and vermilion is put on their foreheads. The man is asked to put five black glass bangles on each wrist of the widow and they are considered married. The party leaves soon after this and there is no ceremony that would correspond to the *gauna* nor *raman*. They go to the man's village where they must feed the community before they are considered to be in good standing.

574 554

585 511 MARRIAGE COSTS. The cost of a Kol wedding is a great financial strain on the parties. Both groups have to pay a part of the costs.

1 Roy, S. C., *Oraon Religion and Customs*, p. 170.

l:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

is the family, but the wife is in no sense his slave and plays a large part in its control and management. All affairs are brought before the family for discussion and decision before final action is taken. If one party is not agreeable to a certain proposition the other tries by coaxing or by some other means to win his or her consent. Nevertheless this picture, given by the men, may be over bright, for it appears from close observation that the rights of the wives are much less than those of the men. She is not as free as the men are and it is not the custom for her to go here or there without hindrance. The woman has a certain amount of what might be called "personal property" and is not debarred from possessing it, though this is limited to her ornaments, her clothes and anything that she may make or acquire for her personal use. When the husband dies his property goes to the sons, but as long as she is living she must be supported by the sons. If there is no son, the property remains with her as long as she lives, but passes to the husband's male relatives at her death.

The Kol widow is not subjected to the same disabilities as are found among certain classes of Hindus. She is not required to shave her head, nor discard her metal bangles and ornaments, nor wear a white *sari*. If young she may marry again, usually not less than a year after her husband's death, and if she is elderly she may go to live with her son or relatives. Widows are expected to make some contribution for their keep and are often found searching for fuel or roots and leaves.

PLACE OF THE WIFE. After marriage the chief duties of the wife are to care for the house, prepare the meals and be a mother to her children. In between it is generally expected that she will find some means to supplement the family income, either by directly engaging in remunerative work, or by gathering roots and tubers from the jungle, cow dung from the roads and paths, or wood for the kitchen fire. Dried cow dung cakes are most generally used for the fire. She does the washing of clothes for herself and her children. Men wash their own clothes.

During her monthly courses there is some interruption of her regular work. During that time she may prepare her own food, but is not permitted to prepare food for another. The man must do his own cooking or make some other arrangements for the time being. There are other taboos at this time; she must never touch men's clothes nor should milk of any kind be touched by her. She may bring water from the well for her own use, but such water is taboo to any other member of the family.

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159 I have tried to be an honest man and the police and government [648] forest officers trust me and have just offered me the post of *Sarkari* [622] *Mukaddam* (government headman) of my village. This is a very high [554] honour for me for which my friends will respect me very much.

BAJRANJI: A KOL AND A FAMINE[1]

I was born in Rewa, my *desh*, but I have no idea of the date of my birth nor of the names of my father or mother. When my parents left Rewa and came to Barela I was just an infant and didn't know much about what was going on. After three or four years my father died in Lunsar village while my mother died in Barela when I was thirty years old.

When my father died I did not get much property, but whatever I got was used up in feeding the people of the community at the time of his death, and later on more was spent on the ceremonial feast following my mother's death. At that time I had a few head of cattle, but soon after four of them were killed and eaten by tigers.

I have been married twice, and by my first wife had two children. The first child was a girl who is now married and who has children of her own. She is about twenty-one years old now. The second child was a boy who is now about twelve years old. But when these children were about twelve and eight respectively their mother became [587] very ill and died. Whatever money I had, all was spent on her for her recovery, but it was of no use. Then I married another wife and this cost me to a great extent the remaining money that I had. [434] Between the two I spent all the money which I possessed, which was about Rs. 300/- in cash and I found myself moneyless.

When I was a boy I was very eager to learn, but it was very difficult for a Kol to think of studying with the Brahmins. The village school seemed reserved for them. So my parents could not send me and they didn't care much about my education, and though I couldn't [212] study I made friends with an educated boy and he helped me and I finished the first Hindi book, but that too I have forgotten and cannot now read nor write.

When my mother died there were three of us: my sister, my [164] brother and myself. Both my brother and sister have since died of plague here in Barela, but I was saved by God's grace. About eight years ago my brother died leaving his wife and children. I do not [595] keep her with me in our home for I know that it would be hard on me and my wife and that if I keep her it would really mean that there will

1 See plate XXVI.